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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 431
By Scroggs

A RESOLUTION to express the sorrow of the General Assembly
at the death of Curtis Person, Sr.

WHEREAS, it was with deep regret and a profound sense of loss that the members of the Tennessee General Assembly, countless golfing associates, and his numerous friends learned of the death of Curtis Person Sr., a golfing legend whose stellar career and many accomplishments represent an exemplary record that most likely will never be equaled, or even approached; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Person won a phenomenal 149 golf championships, including 71 senior events; and

WHEREAS, he was born in Mt. Pleasant, Mississippi, subsequently moved to Shelby County and was a graduate of Memphis Tech High School, where he was a highly regarded all-city football and basketball selection. Mr. Person collected all-state honors in basketball and also won the prep golf title; and

WHEREAS, after working for General Motors in Greenwood, Mississippi, Mr. Person became a Chevrolet dealer in Millington in 1949. He and son, Senator Curtis Person, Jr., were partners in the popular and successful dealership, urging the motoring public "to see the USA in your Chevrolet", until they sold the business in 1974; and

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WHEREAS, the only amateur golfer to win the Tennessee Open twice, Mr. Person bested the rigorous competition in this heralded tournament at the ages of 43 and 47; and

WHEREAS, in 1958, he co-founded the golf tournament that is now the FedEx St. Jude Classic; and

WHEREAS, with fierce determination, he overcame a neuro-muscular disease that impaired his ability to walk in the early 1960's; he recovered to dominate the 50-and over and 55-and-over golf divisions; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, Mr. Person received the prestigious Ben Hogan Award, presented by the Golf Writers Association of America to the player making the greatest comeback from a physical disability; and

WHEREAS, *Golf Digest* magazine ranked Mr. Person as the number one senior player in the world for an unprecedented five consecutive years, starting in 1966. He won the United States Senior Amateur championship in both 1968 and 1969; and

WHEREAS, during one exemplary 72-tournament stretch in the 1960's, Mr. Person won an incredible 38 straight matches and 69 of 72 matches. Two of the three losses required extra holes; and

WHEREAS, he was the playing captain of the victorious 1969 USGA World Senior team, a team that defeated 13 countries in matches at St. Andrews, Scotland; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Person also played in the Bing Crosby Pro-Am Tournament 13 times; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, he received the Distinguished Senior Award from the American Seniors Golf Association; the select group of only 17 persons to be so honored includes President Dwight Eisenhower in 1956 and King Leopold III of Belgium in 1973; and

WHEREAS, in addition to being a member of seven halls of fame, he generously contributed his considerable expertise as a valued member of the board of directors of numerous national organizations; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Person also served ably as president of the Colonial Country Club, chairman of the National PGA Advisory Board and as president of the Southern Golf Association, the Tennessee Golf Association, the Memphis Golf Association and numerous other groups; and

WHEREAS, Gary Player praised Curtis Person, Sr. as “a truly outstanding golfer who was a great ambassador for the game and also for Memphis”; and

WHEREAS, Arnold Palmer commented: “He had one of the greatest short games in golf. And he was a guy you could have a lot of fun with. He was very attentive. We corresponded and we became very close friends.”; and

WHEREAS, Mason Rudolph, a former University of Memphis golfer who competed on the PGA Tour for twenty-one years, credited Mr. Person with helping to start his pro career. He said: “I’m indebted to him for me being able to make a good living playing golf. He put a group together to sponsor me during my first two years on tour.”; and

WHEREAS, Dick Horton, Executive Director of the Tennessee Golf Association, fondly remembered Mr. Person as much more than an inaugural member of the prestigious Tennessee Golf Hall of Fame, stating: “Curtis really cared about amateur golf, and there wasn’t anybody in golf who was better known around the country than he was. He was a champion, a leader, and a contributor to golf in every way. He kind of did it all for golf, and we’ll miss him.”; and

WHEREAS, his son, Senator Person, Jr. said: “His goals were to be captain of a USGA team, win a USGA championship and be the number one player in the world. He did all that and a lot more. He was my hero, and my best friend. . . he was like a brother to me. I’m proud of him.”; and

WHEREAS, Curtis Person, Sr. was preceded in death by his first wife, Helen, who died in 1983 after fifty years of marriage; his second wife, Meredith, survives him; and

WHEREAS, he was the proud father of our colleague, Senator Curtis Person, Jr. and daughter, Dr. Patti Ray of Germantown; brother of Ruth King of Belvedere, California; grandfather of six; and great-grandfather of eight; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we pause to honor the memory of this outstanding Tennessean; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Curtis Person, Sr. and express our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.